

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2245(INI)	Procedure completed
Deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change		
Subject 4.70.02 Cohesion policy, Cohesion Fund (CF)		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 GARCÍA PÉREZ Iratxe	14/07/2016
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 VALCÁRCEL SISO	
		Ramón Luis	
		 PORĘBA Tomasz Piotr	
		 JAKOVČIĆ Ivan	
		 ROPÉ Bronis	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Women's Rights and Gender Equality	 GERICKE Arne	20/04/2017
European Commission	Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy	Commissioner CREU Corina	

Key events			
06/10/2016	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
09/10/2017	Vote in committee		
23/10/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0329/2017	Summary
13/11/2017	Debate in Parliament		

			
14/11/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/11/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0427/2017	Summary
14/11/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2016/2245(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/08006

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE604.887	29/05/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE606.232	22/06/2017	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE606.298	03/07/2017	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0329/2017	23/10/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0427/2017	14/11/2017	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2018)52	22/03/2018	EC	

Deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Iratxe GARCÍA PÉREZ (S&D, ES) on the deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change.

Demographic change entails major economic, social, fiscal and environmental pressures on Member State governments and regional and local authorities. These pressures will be exacerbated by a declining active population and a higher dependency ratio.

According to Members, this issue should be tackled in a coordinated manner through the action of all European, national, regional and local authorities with the involvement of civil society representatives.

Account should be taken of the specific challenges posed by the outermost regions, northernmost regions with very low population density and islands, cross-border and mountain regions. The importance of smart specialisation strategies should be stressed to support regions and local territories in identifying high value-added activities and for building attractive innovation ecosystems that incorporate the circular economy into regional planning.

Characteristics of demographic change in the EU: stressing the disruption of the age pyramid, Members stated that one of the main objectives of an EU demographic policy should be to take into account all territories having to contend with demographic imbalances and the specificities of those territories, factors which cohesion policy has long been seeking to adapt to, and will have to do much more to adapt to after 2020.

There is a steady increase in the number of elderly people around 2 million people every year reach the age of 60 which impacts on spatial, housing and transport planning and on other types of infrastructure and services. Regions have to adapt service provision, infrastructures and policy-making to those demographic patterns and trends.

Coordination of EU policies: the report called for a greater coordination of EU instruments, in particular the common agricultural policy (CAP), ESI Funds, including the Cohesion Fund, European Territorial Cooperation, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the Connecting Europe Facility, so as to ensure a more comprehensive approach to demographic change.

Members highlighted the importance of the EU incorporating demographic considerations throughout the policy spectrum, including in its budget headings, in order to enable the development of these policies, particularly in cohesion, employment, agriculture, environment, the information society, RDI (research, development and innovation), employment, education, social policy, and transport.

The EU demographic policy should aim to be more complete and more coordinated with Member States and horizontally. The report called for

the creation, at a pan-European level, of networks for the exchange of good practices and experiences through which local and regional authorities, as well as civil society stakeholders, can educate each other on addressing issues created by demographic change.

Enhancing the effectiveness of European funds: Members stressed that ESI Funds must address demographic change more effectively in the next programming period and that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) should make a greater contribution to and provide more support towards helping areas with high aging, rurality and population outflow indices to improve their transport and telecommunications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide (including between generations), and enjoy better public services.

The European Social Fund (ESF) should step up its work in training and educating young people, and should promote employability and help people strike a better work-life balance and combat the social and digital exclusion of elderly persons. The Commission is called upon to consider setting up a specific envelope, within the scope of existing funds, dedicated to addressing areas experiencing severe and permanent demographic disadvantages.

Members expressed regret that the EU Youth Guarantee has made limited progress.

In order to avoid territorial divides, Members considered that the EFSI should benefit regions with the most unfavourable demographic dynamics by means of greater investment in EU priority areas such as energy, transport, education, business, innovation research, SMEs, education or social infrastructure. They take the view that consideration of a special status for demographically disadvantaged regions should be discussed in the development of post-2020 cohesion policy.

The future of cohesion policy to address demographic change: although cohesion policy provides the right tools with which to address demographic change, it should play a more prominent role to support regions and provide flexibility in adapting to demographic change.

Regions should use ESI Funds more proactively in order to tackle youth unemployment and give young people the opportunity to start a proper career. Cohesion policy should also promote the employability and inclusion of women.

The Commission is called on to:

- consider defining new criteria with which to distinguish territories facing demographic challenges;
- conduct studies on potential socio-economic and environmental indicators;
- incorporate into cohesion policy new, dynamic indicators, such as a demographic indicator, and in particular the EU Regional Social Progress Index, so as to provide a more complete picture of the specific challenges facing these regions;
- incorporate a flagship initiative on demographics into the Europe 2020 strategy, financed by existing ESI funds.

Lastly, Members underlined the added value of the single community-led local development (CLLD) methodology across all ESI Funds for developing and implementing integrated and tailor-made bottom-up solutions. However, they regretted the fact that CLLD is only mandatory for the EAFRD and that local and participatory approaches are declining in the ERDF, ESF and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). They called on the Commission to make the use of CLLD obligatory across all ESI Funds.

Deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change

The European Parliament adopted by 506 votes to 103 with 77 abstentions, a resolution on the deployment of cohesion policy instruments by regions to address demographic change.

Reacting to demographic change: Members recalled that demographic change is a key challenge, not only at European and global level, but also for local development and territorial enhancement policies in the EU.

Parliament felt that demographic change should be tackled in a coordinated manner through the action of all European, national, regional and local authorities and civil society representatives, taking into account the role of cities, rural areas and coastal and rural areas, fisheries, as well as areas facing specific problems related to their geographical or demographic situation.

While demographic change is creating new issues, it also opens development prospects at the local level. In this context, Parliament felt that the importance of smart specialisation strategies should be stressed to support regions and local territories in identifying high value-added activities and for building attractive innovation ecosystems that incorporate the circular economy into regional planning.

Characteristics of demographic change in the EU: stressing the disruption of the age pyramid, Members stated that one of the main objectives of an EU demographic policy should be to take into account all territories having to contend with demographic imbalances and the specificities of those territories. They suggested support for small and medium-sized mountain and rural farms, which produce products with specific quality characteristics and could serve to reverse or decrease depopulation in those areas.

The resolution stressed the steady increase in the number of elderly people around 2 million people every year reach the age of 60 which impacts on spatial, housing and transport planning and on other types of infrastructure and services. Regions have to adapt service provision, infrastructures and policy-making to those demographic patterns and trends.

Coordination of EU policies: Parliament called for a greater coordination of EU instruments, in particular the common agricultural policy (CAP), ESI Funds, including the Cohesion Fund, European Territorial Cooperation, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the Connecting Europe Facility, so as to ensure a more comprehensive approach to demographic change.

The Commission should propose a strategy on demographic change which gives priority to the following areas:

- provision of new paid employment opportunities to maintain populations;
- infrastructure development as a factor in setting up businesses;
- the extension of information and communication technology (ICT) coverage in sparsely populated areas;
- the provision of basic state services and local public transport to ensure access to public services;
- policies designed to ensure sustainable generational renewal and appropriate care for dependent persons;
- policies on the reception, integration and return of migrants and refugees under international protection;
- the extensive use of new, more attractive settings for conveying information about rural life.

Members suggested:

- incorporating demographic considerations throughout the policy spectrum, including in its budget headings, in order to enable the development of these policies, particularly in cohesion, employment, agriculture, environment, the information society, RDI (research, development and innovation), employment, education, social policy, and transport;
- creating, at a pan-European level, of networks for the exchange of good practices and experiences through which local and regional authorities, as well as civil society stakeholders, can educate each other on addressing issues created by demographic change.

Enhancing the effectiveness of European funds: Parliament stressed that ESI Funds must address demographic change more effectively in the next programming period:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) should make a greater contribution to and provide more support towards helping areas with high aging, rurality and population outflow indices to improve their transport and telecommunications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide (including between generations), and enjoy better public services;
- the European Social Fund (ESF) should step up its work in training and educating young people, and should promote employability and help people strike a better work-life balance and combat the social and digital exclusion of elderly persons.

In general, the regions should use ESI Funds more proactively in order to tackle youth unemployment. Cohesion policy should also promote the employability and inclusion of women.

Members take the view that consideration of a special status for demographically disadvantaged regions should be discussed in the development of post-2020 cohesion policy.

The Commission was asked to: (i) consider the allocation of specific resources, within existing funds, to cover areas with serious and permanent demographic disadvantages; (ii) consider defining new criteria for distinguishing territories facing demographic challenges; (iii) incorporate a flagship demography initiative into the Europe 2020 Strategy, funded by existing ESI Funds.